AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 4, 10, and 27, and cancel claims 2-3, 6, 11, and 25-26 without prejudice, all as indicated below:

Claim 1 (currently amended). A method of binding a plurality of sheets into a bound sheet stack, comprising:

providing a first sheet and a second sheet, at least one of the sheets having a protective coating applied to at least a portion thereof;

~~printing on at least a portion of the first or second sheet;~~

~~following printing on the first or second sheet, applying a transparent protective coating to at least a portion of the first or second sheet;~~

~~following applying the transparent protective coating,~~ overlaying the first and second sheets so that at least a portion of the protective coating on the at least one sheet contacts the other sheet; and

~~following overlaying the first and second sheets,~~ applying a binding energy to a binding region defined on the first and second sheets to thereby bind the sheets into a sheet stack, wherein the binding energy comprises ultrasonic energy~~the binding region comprising a selected area of the transparent protective coating on the at least one sheet, the selected area being in contact with the other sheet~~.

Claims 2-3 (canceled).

Claim 4 (currently amended). The method of claim 1, and wherein the binding energy is selected to cause the ~~transparent~~ protective coating on the at least one sheet to substantially fuse to the other sheet in binding region.

Claim 5 (withdrawn). The method of claim 1, and wherein the binding energy is selected to cause the protective coating on the at least one sheet to partially fuse to the other sheet in binding region.

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (original). The method of claim 1, and wherein the first and second sheets are each defined by a first edge, and when the sheets are overlaid, the first edges of the sheets substantially coincide, and further wherein the binding region extends inwardly from the first edge of the sheets.

Claim 8 (original). The method of claim 1, and wherein:

the sheets are each further defined by a first corner;

when the sheets are overlaid, the respective first corners substantially coincide; and

the binding region is located at the first corner of the sheets.

Claim 9 (original). The method of claim 1, and further comprising, prior to applying the binding energy, folding the first sheet to thereby create a first sheet folded edge, and folding the second sheet to thereby create a second sheet folded edge, and wherein the binding region extends along the folded edges of the sheets.

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Claim 10 (currently amended). A method of producing a bound document, comprising sequentially:

providing a first sheet of media;

providing a second sheet of media;

generating an image on the first sheet of media;

applying a transparent protective coating to the first sheet of media;

laying the second sheet onto the first sheet so at least a portion of the transparent protective coating on the first sheet contacts the second sheet; and

applying a binding energy to a preselected binding region of the first and second sheets to thereby bind the sheets into a sheet stack, wherein the binding energy comprises ultrasonic energy.

Claim 11 (canceled).

Claim 12 (original). The method of claim 10, and wherein the first and second sheets of media are each defined by a respective first edge, and when the second sheet is laid onto the first sheet, the respective first edges of the sheets substantially coincide.

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Claim 13 (previously presented). The method of claim 12, and further comprising sequentially:

providing a third sheet of media which is defined by a first edge;

generating an image on the second sheet of media;

applying a transparent protective coating to the second sheet of media;

laying the third sheet onto the second sheet so at least a portion of the transparent protective coating on the second sheet contacts the third sheet and so that the respective first edges of the sheets substantially coincide; and

applying the binding energy to the preselected binding area to thereby bind the third sheet into the sheet stack.

Claim 14 (withdrawn). The method of claim 13, and wherein the binding energy is first applied to the first and second sheets to form a sheet sub-stack, and the binding energy is then applied to the third sheet and the sheet sub-stack to form the sheet stack.

Claim 15 (original). The method of claim 13, and wherein the binding energy is applied to the first, the second and the third sheets simultaneously to form the sheet stack.

Claim 16 (previously presented). The method of claim 10, and wherein the binding energy is applied so as to cause the transparent protective coating on at least one of the sheets to become plastic in the preselected binding region.

Claims 17-26 (cancelled).

Claim 27 (currently amended). A method of binding a plurality of sheets into a bound sheet stack, comprising:

providing a first sheet and a second sheet;

printing on at least a portion of the first or second sheet, wherein the printing includes thermally fusing an imaging media to the first or second sheet;

following printing on the first or second sheet, applying a transparent protective coating to at least a portion of the first or second sheet;

following applying the transparent protective coating, overlaying the first and second sheets so that at least a portion of the protective coating on the at least one sheet contacts the other sheet; and

following overlaying the first and second sheets, applying a thermal binding energy to a binding region defined on the first and second sheets to thereby bind the sheets into a sheet stack, wherein the binding energy comprises ultrasonic energy~~region comprising a selected area of the transparent protective coating on the at least one sheet, the selected area being in contact with the other sheet~~.

-- End of Amendments to the Claims --

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